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The Jewish Question

Although it is the most recently established mission, the Israeli Mission in Sofia has regular and numerous contacts with Bulgarian Jews at a time when the Western legations have no contact with the local population.

[redacted] the anti-Semitic campaign, which is just being started by the Soviets, has as its goal not only the serious and effective frightening of the Jews but also the prevention of any contact between them and Western diplomatic representatives.

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As can be seen, the Prague trial has already had much effect in this way in Bulgaria. If it is so effective for Bulgaria, which has a small Jewish population, then it can be effective in other countries which have hundreds of thousands of Jews.

There is the question of dismissing Jews from high positions, for every one of them has relatives or friends in Israel or other Western countries, which constitutes for Communist dictatorial regimes too much of a possibility of espionage.

Knowing the Communists' great fear of espionage, one cannot logically say just what they will do next.

At a time when they are liquidating those who have served the party a lifetime, they cannot have any confidence in those who have Western contacts, even if these contacts are denied.

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Of the approximately 50,000 Jews who were in Bulgaria before World War II, there remain now only about 6,500, which is nothing compared to the masses of Jews still living in the other Satellite countries.

Emigration is not entirely suspended, and Jews continue to depart, although in small contingents.

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It is not known if emigration will continue to be the same in the future as Noychev promised. [Thus far] Almost four fifths of the Jewish population has succeeded in leaving the country.

If the Prague trial has not yet had any effect on emigration of Bulgarian Jews, one cannot deny that it struck a hard blow at the Jews who are still in the country.

For those wishing to depart, there is always the fear that the authorities will change their minds and consider them traitors, because they wish to leave their adopted socialist country.

For those who, for family reasons or because of their Communist convictions, decided to remain in the country, the situation is not much better, because there is always the possibility that they will be dismissed from their positions. This is especially true of the Jewish party members who occupy more or less important posts in the administration.

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Their fears are justified, because a number of Jews have already been dismissed from their posts.

This being the situation, the Bulgarian Jews do not dare to go, as formerly, to the Israel Legation to maintain a continuous contact with it, or to go frequently to the synagogue, as they fear being accused of espionage and of setting in motion a trial such as was held in Prague.

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Moscow's anti-Semitic policy is getting a cold welcome in Bulgaria from both party and nonparty members.

Anti-Semitism was attractive to very few at the time of the German occupation, and it is certain that a press campaign would have no chance of success, even among militant Communists.

The recent revelation of the Soviet plot against the Jewish doctors has received much attention throughout the country.

The Central Committee members who participated in the 19th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow last October returned to Sofia much disillusioned. They noticed in the course of their talks with their Soviet friends that a general uneasiness had fallen on the USSR, and the announcement of this plot confirmed their fears.

Local public opinion, always ready to flare up, has reacted the same way to a considerable extent. It was judged that the Soviet regime had to fight again against a serious internal opposition which appeared slowly during the postwar years. Wishful thinking has led to the conclusion, naive, to say the least, that there is an imminent Bulgarian liberation, and rare indeed have been those who have seen a cause and effect relationship in the present reinforcement of the "revolutionary vigilance" of the Sofia government.

However that may be, the Chervenkov government is visibly attempting to avoid involving itself in any large-scale anti-Semitic operation, except with caution. The affair of the operetta "Delyana" once again showed the Prime Minister that the Russian policy in Bulgaria is "divide and rule," and that his rival, Damyanov, is still in favor with the Kremlin. Because of this, he has been inclined to be quite modest about showing off the front which the Russians have given him: officially, Ruben Levi has remained chairman of the Committee of Science, Art, and Culture, and only after several weeks will it be learned that he has received a new post.

The purge of the militia, in which the Jewish element occupies an important place, is moving very slowly. The deputy director of the militia, a Jew, has not been dismissed from his duties in accordance with Moscow's demands. In agreement with the Minister of Interior, Prime Minister Chervenkov sent him [the deputy director of the militia] to Moscow at the beginning of January to plead his personal cause and that of his fellow Jews. Thus, the party and its secretary-general will be able to say, if need be, that they had to act according to orders.

The government attitude toward Jews who wish to emigrate is inspired by the same directives. The militia received instructions to advise those interested to hasten their departure, and there is no difficulty in getting an exit visa. The fact is that the number of departures for Israel were few in the first 11 months of 1952, but during recent weeks, this number is becoming greater.

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Personal Passports

It appears from the confidential instructions which have been given to the people's soviets that the new ruling on passports will result in dividing the population into three classes.

The privileged class and members of the community who are no longer able to work will receive a lifetime passport.

Workers and civil servants will get a 5-year passport.

Persons without regular employment, or those suspected by the regime, will receive a provisional certificate which assigns them to a forced residence (as a rule, to their birthplace).

This set of measures will permit the government to expel simply and rapidly, by administrative decision, the surplus population in cities, especially in Sofia, where many people live who do not perform work judged by the regime to be useful to the community.

Furthermore, in Bulgaria, as in the USSR, all men and women in a position to do manual or intellectual work will be counted and will have to be given a work book. This measure, alarming to many Bulgarians, will allow the party to introduce forced labor in factories or on the collective farms, because the Bulgarian nationals who have only provisional certificates can see that they may be assigned to forced residences at any time.

This new legislation, which transforms the country into an immense forced-labor camp, gives the government a powerful weapon for asserting its discretionary power over all subjects and also for strengthening its control in time of peace, as well as during war.

PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE TAKEN

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The "Bulgarska Fotografija" (Bulgarian Photography) State Enterprise, which is attached to the Committee for Cinematography, places its permanent and temporary photo studios at the disposal of the local population to have passport photographs taken. The photographs will be taken in accordance with the directions given by the Ministry of Interior on 29 December 1952. Photographs will be taken in accordance with the directions given by the Ministry of Interior on 29 December 1952. Photographs not taken in accordance with specifications may be refused by the passport office. The taking of passport photographs will be organized by primary OF (Otechestven Front, Fatherland Front) organizations.

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